

Introduction to managing exercises

Speed read

- Exercises are a controlled, objective-driven activity with a simulated event used for testing, practising or evaluating processes or capabilities.
- Exercises are an essential component of preparedness and enhance capability and contribute to continuous improvement.
- Exercises are tailored to meet an identified need to be conducted at all levels of an organisation and involve all relevant stakeholders.

Key points

Why conduct exercises? Exercises are useful to:

- evaluate plans
- explore current and future issues
- evaluate equipment, techniques and processes
- meet regulatory or portfolio goals
- develop or assess competence
- demonstrate capability
- practise interoperability
- validate training
- identify gaps
- promote awareness

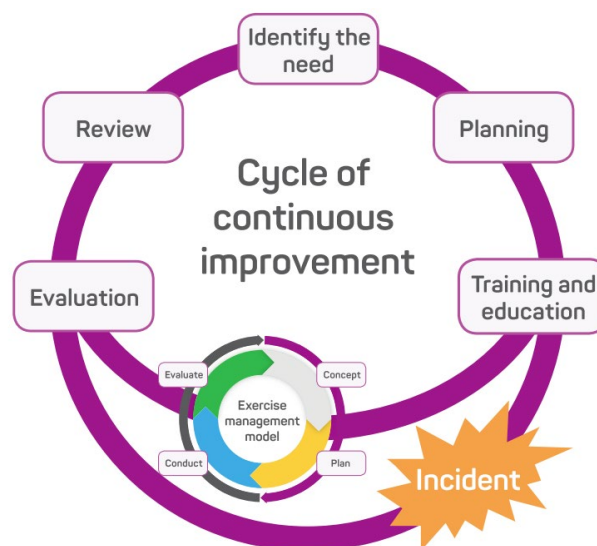


Figure 2: Cycle of continuous improvement

Exercises are conducted in a cycle of continuous improvement (Figure 2). During the cycle, a community may be impacted by a hazard and a response occurs. This response is then evaluated, and gaps in knowledge and capabilities are identified. Plans, policies, and procedures are reviewed accordingly and actions to improve performance are implemented. When an exercise is conducted, a simulated event is substituted for a real incident.

Exercises vary in forms, complexity and scale. E.g. a small, single organisation exercise of an emergency management organisation practicing the setup of an emergency operations centre. Large exercises involve more than one organisation and may include regional, national or international participants.

There are three types of exercises:

1. **Discussion exercises** may include seminars, presentations, hypotheticals and immersive simulations, and two-way conversations.
2. **Functional exercises** are designed to test or practice specific functions such as command, planning or intelligence.

- 3. Field exercises** are generally complex and larger scale, with an activity conducted in ‘real time’ under simulated conditions.

Successful exercise management has a clear approach and structure according to four phases: concept development, planning, conduct and post exercise activities (Figure 4).

Ensure that:

- An exercise manager or management team is appointed
- exercises are appropriate to organisational, cultural, environmental or risk context
- exercises reflect organisation and community engagement and needs
- exercises align to a stated aim and objectives
- exercises are coordinated and conducted in a safe and systematic way
- resources are used effectively and efficiently
- evaluation occurs throughout lessons learnt are captured
- opportunities for learnings are identified.

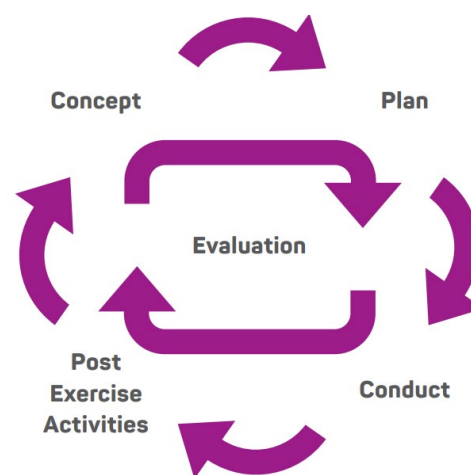


Figure 4: Exercise management model: the four phases and the relationship to evaluation

Take action

- Check out the suite of complementary resources for [Managing Exercises](#), including templates, case studies and toolkits for specialised exercising areas, such as recovery exercising and lessons management.

More information

- [Managing Exercises](#) (AIDR 2023), Chapter 1
- [Recovery Exercising Toolkit](#) (AIDR 2023) provides an in-depth exploration of recovery issues over time and can be used to support exercise management programs to include a recovery considerations.
- [Systemic Disaster Risk](#) (AIDR 2021)
- [Australian Disaster Preparedness Framework 2018](#)
- [Emergency Planning Handbook](#) (AIDR 2020)
- [Lessons Management Handbook](#) (AIDR 2019)